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Committee on Information
Twenty-sixth session
26 April-7 May 2004
Agenda item 8

Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session

Draft report

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I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In section I, paragraph 2, of its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information:

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly",

and requested the Committee on Information and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group,[1] reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182 and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67. The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to fifty-first sessions (see resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98 A, 40/164 A, 41/68 A, 42/162 A and B, 43/60 A and B, 44/50, 45/76 A and B, 46/73 B, 47/73 B, 48/44 B, 49/38 B, 50/31 B and 51/138 B), the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee[2] and its recommendations and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in its resolution 34/182. At its fifty-second session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[3] and adopted consensus resolutions 52/70 A and B of 10 December 1997. At its fifty-third session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[4] and adopted consensus resolutions 53/59 A and B of 3 December 1998. At its fifty-fourth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[5] and adopted consensus resolutions 54/82 A and B of 6 December 1999. At its fifty-fifth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[6] and adopted consensus resolutions 55/136 A and B of 8 December 2000. At its fifty-sixth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[7] and adopted consensus

resolutions 56/64 A of 10 December 2001 and 56/64 B of 24 December 2001. At its fifty-seventh session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[8] and adopted consensus resolutions 57/130 A and B of 11 December 2002. At its fifty-eighth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[9] and adopted consensus resolutions 58/101 A and B of 9 December 2003.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely, China and Mexico; at its forty-first session, the Assembly appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, the Assembly appointed Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe as new members of the Committee; and at its forty-fourth session, the Assembly appointed Nepal as a new member.

5. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 74 to 78 and appointed Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay as members. The Assembly also decided to appoint the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic as a member of the Committee, with immediate effect, to fill the vacancy left by the German Democratic Republic.

6. At its forty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 78 to 79 and appointed Burkina Faso as a member.

7. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 79 to 81 and appointed the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members.

8. At its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 81 to 83 and appointed Gabon and Israel as members.

9. At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 83 to 88 and appointed Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan and South Africa as members.

10. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 88 to 89 and appointed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a member.

11. At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 89 to 90 and appointed Georgia as a member.

12. At its fifty-third session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 90 to 93 and appointed Angola, the Republic of Moldova and Solomon Islands as members.

13. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 93 to 95 and appointed Liberia and Mozambique as members of the Committee.

14. At its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 95 to 97 and appointed Armenia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as members of the Committee. Furthermore, the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to membership in the United Nations, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/12 of 1 November 2000, terminated the membership of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in all organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations, including the Committee on Information.

15. At its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 96 to 98 and appointed Azerbaijan and Monaco as members.

16. At its fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 98 to 99 and appointed Saudi Arabia as a member.

17. At its fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 99 to 102, and appointed Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Switzerland as members.

18. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea

Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Lebanon
Liberia
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Malta
Mexico
Monaco
Mongolia
Morocco
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Suriname
Switzerland
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Zimbabwe

II. Organizational questions

A. Opening of the session

19. The organizational meeting of the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Information was held on 26 April 2004 at United Nations Headquarters. The session was opened by the Chairman of the Committee, Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury (Bangladesh).

B. Election of officers

20. Following an oral amendment by the Chairman to the provisional agenda, the Committee decided to include "Election of officers" as one of the agenda items. Although the Bureau was elected for a two-year term at its twenty-fifth session, Larbi Djacta (Algeria) made a request to withdraw from the Bureau. Kais Kabtani (Tunisia) was nominated by the African Group to serve as a Vice-Chairman in place

of Mr. Djacta. The officers of the Committee on Information for the period 2003-2004 are thus as follows:

Chairman:
Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

Vice-Chairmen:
Kais Kabtani (Tunisia)
Sebastião Filipe Coelho Ferreira (Portugal)
Marius Ioan Dragolea (Romania)

Rapporteur:
Janice Miller (Jamaica)

C. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

21. At its organizational meeting, the Committee adopted the following agenda and programme of work (A/AC.198/2004/1):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
4. Admission of new members.
5. Statement by the Chairman.
6. Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.
7. General debate and consideration of substantive questions.
8. Open-ended working group of the Committee on Information.
9. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day.
10. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

22. The Committee held the substantive meetings of its twenty-sixth session at United Nations Headquarters from 26 April to 7 May 2004.

23. For its consideration of agenda item 7, the Committee had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the continuing reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2004/2);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2004/3);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries and in-depth review of library activities (A/AC.198/2004/4);

(d) Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group in 2003 (A/AC.198/2004/5);

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on better publicizing the work and decisions of the General Assembly (A/AC.198/2004/6);

(f) Note by the Secretary-General on the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 (A/AC.198/2004/7).

D. Observers

24. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Bahamas, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, the Dominican Republic, Iceland, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Nauru, Panama, Paraguay, Qatar, Rwanda, Samoa and Uganda. The Holy See also participated as an observer.

25. Representatives of the following specialized agencies also participated as observers: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the World Intellectual Property Organization. The African Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie also participated as observers.

E. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day

26. On 3 May, the Committee observed World Press Freedom Day 2004 with an event organized by the Department of Public Information. The Secretary-General opened the meeting, which was also addressed by the Chairman of the Committee on Information, the Director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the President of the United Nations Correspondents Association. A number of distinguished print and broadcast journalists took part in a panel discussion on the theme "Reporting and Under-reporting: Who Decides?", which was moderated by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/35/21), annex, sect. V.

[2] Ibid., *Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/36/21); ibid., *Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* and corrigendum (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., *Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* and corrigenda (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., *Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/39/21); ibid., *Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/40/21); ibid., *Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/41/21); ibid., *Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/42/21); ibid., *Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/43/21); ibid., *Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/44/21); ibid., *Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/45/21); ibid., *Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/46/21); ibid., *Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/47/21); ibid., *Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/48/21); ibid., *Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/49/21); ibid., *Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/50/21); and ibid., *Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/51/21).

[3] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/52/21/Rev.1).

[4] Ibid., *Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/53/21/Rev.1).

[5] Ibid., *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* and addendum (A/54/21/Rev.1).

[6] Ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/55/21).

[7] Ibid., *Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/56/21).

[8] Ibid., *Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/57/21).

[9] Ibid., *Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/58/21).

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Chapter III
General debate

1. Statements in the general debate were made by the following States members of the Committee on Information: Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil (on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-speaking countries and the Rio Group), Burkina Faso, Colombia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland (on behalf of the European Union), Israel, Jamaica (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), Japan, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Senegal, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Russian Federation, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen. Statements were also made by two observers: Cape Verde and Qatar (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China).

2. The general debate was preceded by statements made by the Chairman of the Committee and the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Department of Public Information.

3. In taking up the substantive questions before the Committee, most speakers emphasized the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and of the Department of Public Information as its public voice. One speaker, speaking on behalf of a large group, noted that the Department assumed the important task of projecting the image of the United Nations to the public, of explaining its role and showing the impact of its actions. The challenge for the Department, he emphasized, was not only to ensure a wider outreach of communications strategies, but also to contribute to the concretization of the goals and objectives of the United Nations as set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the medium-term plan. The work of the Department would, therefore, be guided to achieving these goals

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and objectives, in particular, to promoting priority development issues, such as poverty eradication, HIV/AIDS, dialogue among civilizations and cultures, sustainable development and the needs of African countries, he said.

4. Another speaker, pointing out the important role the Department played in promoting the broader goals of the Organization, said that in today's "monopolized world of media", it was crucial in bringing accurate information to the attention of people worldwide. Another speaker, who described the Department of Public Information as a conduit for the flow of information between the United Nations and people of the world, said that by combating biased information of all kinds in the world's communication matrix, the Department could lead the march towards harmony within its own sphere of influence — the domain of information. Another speaker, calling on the Department to maintain its focus on areas of specific interest for developing countries and countries with economies in transition, asked to publicize the results of the Chernobyl disaster.

5. Several speakers said they attached great importance to the commemoration of World Press Freedom Day, which in 2004 was observed at United Nations Headquarters on 3 May. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group, reiterated its commitment to a free press and its important role in a free society. She regretted that in many countries press freedom did not exist and the dissemination of information was controlled and limited. She reminded the Committee that freedom of opinion and expression was a right set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this context, she recalled that the Department had renamed its training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries in honour of Reham al-Farra, a Department of Public Information staff member who was killed along with 21 others in the attack on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad in 2003. Her death, and the loss of so many other talented media personnel and journalists, was a sobering reminder of the cost of freedom of expression, she underlined.

6. A number of speakers commended the Department for implementing its annual training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries, which contributed to the promotion of capacity-building in developing countries as well as in countries in transition.

7. Another speaker noted that one of the indispensable conditions for information to play its role in society was freedom of expression, which was essential for the consolidation of a new world information order. It was regrettable that in exercising that basic freedom, some excesses were committed. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press should be exercised with total responsibility and in a constructive spirit, the speaker stressed.

8. Several speakers referred to the role of the Committee on Information vis-à-vis the Department of Public Information and emphasized the importance of constructive interaction between the Department of Public Information and the Committee. According to one speaker, who spoke on behalf of a large group, this engagement was essential to ensure that the shared objectives of providing quality and focused information service to the United Nations family and to the wider public were met. One speaker, recalling that the Committee on Information had been established as the forum to formulate a cogent and coherent information policy for the world which could bring about harmony, goodwill and greater understanding among peoples by building bridges between various societies, cultures, religions and

regions, regretted that the Committee had little gains and few achievements to report. The story of dwindling understanding between religions, cultures and ideologies reflected a less than optimistic picture, he underlined.

9. Referring to the growing digital divide between developed and developing countries, several speakers called for greater efforts by the international community and the Department of Public Information to close that gap. One speaker commented that, as a result of the inequality in the use of information and communications technologies, the disparity between the developed and developing countries in the field of public information had widened. Certain countries, he asserted, continued to take advantage of those imbalances, and had encroached on the sovereignty and interests of other countries. Some countries were taking advantage of their monopoly of modern communications to distort the reality of the developing countries, he said.

10. A number of speakers discussed the outcome of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, which was held in Geneva in December 2003, and referred to the second phase of the Summit, which would be held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005. Welcoming the holding of the Geneva phase of the Summit, a number of speakers said the Tunis phase should come up with concrete initiatives at all levels to bridge the digital divide and to place information and communications technologies at the service of development. He called on the Department of Public Information to contribute to raising the international community's awareness of the Summit's importance and the need to join efforts to make it a success. Another speaker, expressing similar views, noted that the digital divide could only be closed with the presence of the requisite political will, which was referred to in Africa as "digital solidarity". She hoped that the Tunis phase of the World Summit would be able to make a major contribution to promoting access to technology for all.

11. One speaker, addressing the Committee on behalf of a large group, referred to the Secretary-General's report on the continuing reorientation of the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/2004/2) and expressed her group's satisfaction with the process of reorientation set out in the report. Welcoming the broad-based restructuring that had been implemented, she noted that, with a new organizational structure, mission statement and operating model, the Department had the tools it needed to carry out its activities in a focused and effective manner. She also welcomed the Department's new strategic direction, which included a new client-oriented approach, greater system-wide coordination and the embedding of a culture of evaluation into its work.

12. Another speaker commended the Department for doing a good job, often under difficult circumstances during the last year. He noted with satisfaction that the Department had made progress in implementing its reforms, notably its new client-oriented approach. That positive approach must allow for the establishment of closer ties between the public and the Organization by making its actions and policies more comprehensible. A number of speakers commended the Department for reaching out to targeted audiences, such as NGOs, research institutions, libraries and academic institutions. Another speaker urged the Department to focus on further reinforcing partnerships with Governments, as well as on building bridges with civil society and non-governmental organizations.

13. Speaking on behalf of a large group, one speaker welcomed the progress achieved by the Department since the commencement of the reorientation exercise in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of the Department in accordance with the mandate established by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information. The restructuring of the Department had added impetus to the work of the Department and had resulted in the delivery of targeted and focused information on the United Nations, noted another speaker, who also spoke on behalf a large group. The adoption of a client-oriented approach in the Department's interaction with other Secretariat departments was commended by one speaker, who noted his particular appreciation for the fact that the Department had already established formal relationships with 24 client departments and that 30 communications strategies had been concluded with them.

14. Referring to the new culture of evaluation adopted by the Department, one speaker welcomed the completion of the first annual programme impact review and the formulation of 170 performance indicators, which would enable programme managers to assess their activities. Another speaker, while welcoming the continuing promotion and refinement of a culture of evaluation and performance management, cautioned that data collection, valuable as it was to any evaluation exercise, could not be the only index of performance management. There must be simultaneous emphasis on data analysis and possible adaptation of that analysis to improve the system, he said. He also observed that the emphasis on data collection should not be to the detriment of the day-to-day work of programme managers.

15. Several delegations, focusing on the activities of the report of the Secretary-General on the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries (A/AC.198/2004/4), praised the efforts of the Department to improve the services of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and its depository libraries. The training programmes for the librarians of United Nations depository libraries to enhance their capacity for information management and development was also highlighted by a speaker. Concerning the modernization and integrated management of libraries, one speaker took note of the results of the work carried out by the Steering Committee established to follow the question. They constituted a good basis for the realization of the goal of improving the efficiency of the United Nations library system, he said. Another speaker noted that, now that the Steering Committee had completed its organizational phase, he looked forward to the achievement of concrete results that would enable United Nations system libraries to more efficiently meet the needs of their diverse clientele.

16. A number of delegates referred to the report of the Secretary-General on better publicizing the work and decisions of the General Assembly (A/AC.198/2004/6). Welcoming the recommendations contained in the report to publicize the work and decisions of the General Assembly, one speaker encouraged the Department to establish a working relationship with the Office of the General Assembly President. Another speaker, echoing those views, said a better dissemination of the work and decisions of the General Assembly was imperative, and elaborating a communications strategy to do so would be a positive development. Another speaker, speaking on behalf of a large group, also commended the Department's efforts to better publicize the work and decisions of the General Assembly, but he added that further efforts were required to make the Assembly's work more visible to the wider public. That could be best assisted through the adoption of an approach which made the Assembly's work more attractive and accessible. Such an approach,

he asserted, might need to be augmented by the requisite human and financial resources, including the placement of the necessary staff in the Office of the President of the Assembly.

17. Several speakers singled out the United Nations web site as an effective medium for dissemination of information about the United Nations. One speaker, representing a large group, noted that the web site continued to register an increasing number of hits, which was a reflection of the relevance of the work of the United Nations, and the wide public interest in its activities across the globe. She welcomed the efforts of the Department to make the web site more relevant through the use of innovations such as live webcasts of important debates and meetings. Another speaker, also representing a large group, while expressing support and appreciation for the Department's work to strengthen the United Nations web site in all official languages, expressed concern at the "increasing gap" among web sites in different official languages. More resources should be allocated to achieve equality among all official languages, he said, and urged that, in order to bridge the current gap, the Department should take into account the specificity of some languages which used non-Latin and bi-directional scripts. Another speaker, referring to the continuing imbalance in the capacities of the web site in the different languages, cited the example of the Arabic site, which he said required further improvement so it might satisfy the needs of Arabic-speaking visitors.

18. However, presenting a different view, another speaker underlined that, in light of its limited resources, the Department would not be able to undertake all of the proposed improvements to the web site simultaneously. The Department should, therefore, give greater priority to deepening and enlarging the capacity of the web site in those major languages that currently received the most traffic. Another speaker, while commending the Department for endeavouring to achieve parity in the use of the six official languages on the United Nations web site, especially the enhancement of the multilingual News Centre web portal and its efforts to expand its capacity to provide webcasts in official languages, argued that multilingualism, as defined in this context, did not equate with universality. The six official languages, for example, were spoken by approximately 40 per cent of first-language speakers worldwide. Considering that the Official Document System was expected to be made freely available to the public during the fourth quarter of 2004 through its integration with the United Nations web site, he questioned whether the use of human and financial resources to try to achieve language parity on the web site was justified in the light of the other priorities of the Organization.

19. Several speakers argued that in spite of increasing technological progress, the traditional means of communication, such as radio, remained vital, particularly in developing countries, where access to more advanced forms of communication was still far from satisfactory. Describing radio as the cheapest and the most accessible means of communication in his subregion, one speaker urged that necessary funds be made available to the Department to sustain the live radio project, which had been made an integral part of the Department's activities. Another speaker, referring to the importance of radio for the least developed Portuguese-speaking countries, asked the Department to strengthen United Nations Radio's Portuguese unit.

20. A number of speakers cited the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group (A/AC.198/2004/5) and commended the Department for its leadership role within the Group. One speaker,

citing an example of the successful proactive efforts of the Group, noted its coordinated efforts to promote greater interest in and awareness of issues concerning African development, including the information provided on the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development. He also noted with appreciation the involvement of the Group in drawing greater public awareness to Expo 2005 Aichi, Japan, for which the Group had formed a consultative group. Another speaker suggested the formation of a regional component of the Communications Group, which he argued would help reach out to various national audiences.

21. Several speakers discussed the vital links between public information and the United Nations peacekeeping operations. One speaker, representing a large group of countries, welcomed the efforts of the Department to develop a strategy to publicize new peacekeeping missions, particularly in Africa. Saying that United Nations peacekeeping operations had assumed paramount importance against the backdrop of an international era beset with conflict, another speaker said information components of peacekeeping operations had a vital role to play in forging proper understanding of the mission's objectives and capabilities. The Department should continue its efforts to strengthen its capacity through the development of a coherent information strategy with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, he said. One speaker, referring to a certain gap that existed between public perceptions about peacekeeping operations and the current reality, argued that the preparation and dissemination of a message on United Nations peacekeeping operations must be part of the Department's priorities. Another speaker emphasized that there was a greater need than ever to develop a comprehensive public information strategy on peacekeeping operations to ensure the greatest public impact.

22. The report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2004/3), drew the attention of most speakers. One speaker, who described the establishment of the regional United Nations information centre in Brussels on 30 January 2004 as part of the Secretary-General's rationalization process as being of particular significance to the members of the group of countries she represented, welcomed the proposed model for regionalization of United Nations information centres. Another speaker noted that, following the first phase of establishing the Brussels regional centre, it was now necessary to move into the second phase — to channel all the resources saved from the closing down of nine national centres to support the information activities of the United Nations in developing countries. Another speaker, saying that the Secretary-General, in his report submitted for consideration by the Committee, had convincingly explained the need to reorganize the information centre system, urged that the hands of the Secretariat not be tied but that countries work with it to effect this long-overdue reorganization.

23. Several other speakers presented views on the rationalization process. One speaker, representing a large group, observed that it was premature to present proposals on further regionalization. The United Nations information centres played a significant role in disseminating information and in promoting public awareness of and mobilizing support for the Organization's work, he said. Enough time should be given to examine the results and possible added value of the creation of the Western European hub before presenting any new proposals, which should take into account, among other things, the existing differences in information technology and communications between Western Europe and other regions of the developing world. He emphasized the need to allocate adequate resources for the effective

functioning and strengthening of the United Nations information centres in developing countries.

24. One speaker, arguing for maintaining the information centre in the country he represented, wondered if it was logical to close information centres at a time when the Organization was being misunderstood. Another speaker cautioned that reform of the Department and rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres should not be implemented simply for the purpose of achieving budget savings for the Department. Another speaker, citing the example of the information centre hosted by his country, said that given the fact that developing countries were lagging behind in access to information technology, the closure of the centre there would only deepen the lack of information about the United Nations in the subregion his country belonged to. Saying that his Government had provided the centre with premises free of charge, partly paid its telephone bills and fully covered its water and electricity bills, he argued that the centre's overall cost was almost insignificant compared to the activities it carried out. Expressing similar views, another speaker urged caution before applying the idea of establishing regional hubs. Due consideration should be accorded to the specific needs of different countries, particularly in countries with underdeveloped communication infrastructure and systems. Otherwise, these changes would jeopardize the objectives of the Committee and the mandate of the Department, she noted. Several other speakers referred to the costs shared by their Governments in hosting United Nations information centres in their countries and highlighted the advantages of United Nations information centres in their own countries and in countries they served.

25. Another speaker, referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres, wanted to know why certain Member States had been excluded from their services. He was not fully persuaded by the proposals of the Department of Public Information regarding the regionalization plan for United Nations information centres. That discussion and the establishment of regional hubs should take into account the needs of each region. A regional hub was rendered irrelevant if it only covered one Member State, he asserted. Another speaker argued that United Nations information centres carried symbolic value at the national level and spoke against closing down any of the existing centres without a proper assessment of the specific needs and conditions of each centre.

26. The Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information provided an in-depth response to a wide range of questions raised by delegations during the general debate, on 29 April 2004.

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Draft report

Chapter IV
Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session

Draft resolution A
Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,[1]

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,[2]

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations

[1] To be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/59/21).
[2] A/59/__.

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and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim at, in addition to bilateral cooperation, providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication[3] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

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[3] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980*, vol. 1, *Resolutions*, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

Draft resolution B
United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reiterating its decision to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations to it relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Concurring with the view of the Secretary-General that the fundamental premise underlying the reorientation efforts of the Department of Public Information remains General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, establishing the Department, which states in paragraph 2 of annex I that "the activities of the Department should be so organized and directed as to promote to the greatest possible extent an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world",

Concurring also with the view of the Secretary-General that the contents of public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations, in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in order to create broad-based global support for the United Nations,

Stressing that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency,

Noting that the comprehensive review of the work of the Department of Public Information, requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, and the implementation of its second phase, described in the report of the Secretary-General on reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session,[4] as well as the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change",[5] and its resolutions 57/300 of 20 December 2002 and 58/101 B of 9 December 2003, as they apply to the Department of Public Information, provide an opportunity to take further steps to rationalize the work of the Department in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness, and to maximize the use of its resources,

Expressing its concern that the gap in the information and communication technologies between the developed and the developing countries has continued to widen and that vast segments of the population in developing countries are not benefiting from the present information and technology revolution, and, in this regard, underlining the necessity of rectifying the imbalances of the global information and technology revolution in order to make it more just, equitable and effective,

[4] A/AC.198/2003/2.

[5] A/57/387 and Corr.1.

Recognizing that developments in the information and communication technology revolution open vast new opportunities for economic growth and social development and can play an important role in the eradication of poverty in developing countries, and, at the same time, emphasizing that it also poses challenges and risks and could lead to the further widening of disparities between and within countries,

Recalling its resolution 56/262 of 15 February 2002 on multilingualism, and emphasizing the importance of making appropriate use of the official languages of the United Nations in the activities of the Department of Public Information, aiming to eliminate the disparity between the use of English and the other five official languages,

Welcoming Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Switzerland to membership in the Committee on Information,

I. Introduction

1. *Reaffirms* its resolution 13 (I), in which it established the Department of Public Information, and all other relevant General Assembly resolutions related to the activities of the Department;

2. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to continue to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993 and other mandates as established by the General Assembly;

3. *Notes* that the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005[6] continues to serve as a guideline that sets out the overall orientation of the public information programme for the Organization's goals through effective communication, and recalls its resolution 58/269 of 23 December 2003, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", in which it requested the Secretary-General to prepare, on a trial basis, for submission to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, a strategic framework to replace the current four-year medium-term plan;

4. *Reaffirms* that the United Nations remains the indispensable foundation of a peaceful and just world and that its voice must be heard in a clear and effective manner, and emphasizes the essential role of the Department of Public Information in this context;

5. *Stresses* the importance of clear and timely provision of information by the Secretariat to Member States, upon their request, within the framework of existing mandates and procedures, and encourages the Department of Public Information to continue to do so;

6. *Reaffirms* the central role of the Committee on Information in United Nations public information policies and activities, including the restructuring process of the Department of Public Information, and the prioritization of its activities, and welcomes the continued constructive interaction between the Department and the members of the Committee;

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[6] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6* and corrigendum (A/57/6/Rev.1 and Corr.1).

7. *Calls upon* Member States to ensure, to the extent possible, that recommendations relating to the programme of the Department of Public Information originate and are considered in the Committee on Information;

8. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, following the priorities laid down by the General Assembly in the medium-term plan and using the United Nations Millennium Declaration[7] as its guide, to pay particular attention to such major issues as the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic, combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and the needs of the African continent;

9. *Also requests* the Department of Public Information to pay attention to all major issues addressed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals in carrying out its activities;

10. *Concurs* with the Secretary-General on the need to enhance the technological infrastructure of the Department of Public Information in order to widen its outreach and improve the United Nations web site;

11. *Recognizes* the important work carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its collaboration with news agencies and broadcasting organizations in developing countries in disseminating information on priority issues, and encourages a continued collaboration between the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the promotion of culture and in the fields of education and communication;

II. General activities of the Department of Public Information

12. *Notes* the proposals and actions of the Secretary-General to improve the effective and targeted delivery of public information activities, including the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information in this regard at its twenty-seventh session;

13. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information is the focal point for information policies of the United Nations and the primary news centre for information about the United Nations, its activities and those of the Secretary-General, and encourages a closer integration of functions between the Department and the office providing spokesman services for the Secretary-General;

14. *Welcomes* the recommendations of the Department of Public Information for developing a communications strategy on publicizing the work and decisions of the General Assembly,[8] encourages the Department to establish a closer working relationship with the Office of the President of the General Assembly, and requests the Secretary-General to report further on the progress achieved in, and the remaining challenges to, the implementation of his recommendations to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

[7] See resolution 55/2.

[8] See A/AC.198/2004/6.

15. *Emphasizes* the central role of the Committee on Information in making recommendations to the General Assembly on the mandate of the Department of Public Information, takes note of the reorientation exercise in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of the Department of Public Information, which should be in accordance with the mandates established by the Assembly, and requests the Secretary-General to report on progress achieved in this regard to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

16. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in the context of the reorientation process, to continue to exert all efforts to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations web site and the United Nations News Service, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization and that they maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

17. *Reiterates* that all printed materials of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with existing mandates, should not duplicate other publications of the United Nations system and should be produced in a cost-effective manner;

18. *Welcomes* the reconstitution of the Publications Board, in accordance with existing legislative mandates, by the Department of Public Information;

19. *Urges* the Department of Public Information to continue to exhibit transparency to the greatest extent possible, so as to increase awareness of the impact of its programmes and activities;

20. *Emphasizes* that, through its reorientation, the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition, and that such reorientation contributes to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications;

21. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to strengthen the coordination between the Department of Public Information and other departments of the Secretariat, including the designation of focal points to work with substantive departments, in the context of its client-oriented approach, to identify target audiences and develop information programmes and media strategies for priority issues, and emphasizes that public information capacities and activities in other departments should function under the guidance of the Department;

22. *Welcomes* the initiatives that have been taken by the Department of Public Information to strengthen the public information system of the United Nations, and, in this regard, stresses the importance of a coherent and results-oriented approach being taken by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the programmes and funds of the United Nations system involved in public information activities, as well as the provision of resources for their implementation, and that feedback from Member States on the relevance and effectiveness of its programme delivery should be taken into account;

23. *Appreciates* the continued efforts of the Department of Public Information in issuing daily press releases, and requests the Department to continue

providing this invaluable service to both Member States and representatives of the media, while considering possible means of improving their production process and streamlining their format, structure and length, keeping in mind the views of Member States;

24. *Requests* that during the deliberations on the item entitled "Questions relating to information" in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) during the successive regular sessions of the General Assembly, an informal interaction between the Secretariat and members of the Committee should take place after the presentation by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information on the substance of that oral briefing, within existing resources;

Multilingualism and public information

25. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information to enhance multilingualism in its activities, and encourages the Department to continue its endeavours in this regard;

26. *Emphasizes* the importance of ensuring the full, equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations in all activities of the Department of Public Information, and stresses the importance of fully implementing its resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, in section C of which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the texts of all new public documents in all six official languages and information materials of the United Nations are made available daily through the United Nations web site and are accessible to Member States without delay;

27. *Recognizes* the fact that the integration of the Official Document System with the United Nations web site, scheduled to take place during the fourth quarter of 2004, will significantly enhance the multilingual nature of the site by providing free, public access to all United Nations parliamentary documents in the six official languages;

28. *Reaffirms* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information has appropriate staffing capacity in all official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities;

29. *Reminds* the Secretary-General of the need to include in future programme budget proposals for the Department of Public Information the importance of using all six official languages in its activities;

Bridging the digital divide

30. *Welcomes* the holding of the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held from 10 to 12 December 2003, and looks forward to the second phase, to be held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005;

31. *Calls upon* the Department of Public Information to contribute in raising the awareness of the international community of the importance of the World Summit on the Information Society and the need to join efforts to make it a success;

32. *Recalls* paragraph 32 of its resolution 58/101 B, welcomes the contribution of the Department of Public Information in publicizing the efforts of the Secretary-General to close the digital divide as a means of spurring economic

growth and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, and, in this context, requests the Department to further enhance its role;

III. New programmatic priorities for the Department of Public Information

33. *Takes note* of the note by the Secretary-General on the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 on the programmatic aspects for the Department of Public Information;[9]

34. *Notes* that the proposed strategic framework does not include the first part;

35. *Notes also* that the executive direction and management elements of the programme, as well as the details of performance measures (baselines and targets), external factors and outputs, together with resource requirements, will be reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007;

36. *Stresses* the need to include in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007, to the fullest extent possible, quantifiable and verifiable indicators for measuring expected accomplishments, so as to give a clear indication of the progress towards the accomplishment of objectives set;

37. *Also stresses* the importance of full compliance with all legislative mandates when preparing the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007;

38. *Recommends* that, in the last sentence of paragraph 1 in the Overall orientation section of the note by the Secretary-General on the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007,[10] the words "in particular, the legislative mandates included in the present biennial programme plan, as well as those of" be inserted after the words "General Assembly", and the word "and" be deleted;

39. *Acknowledges* that the Department of Public Information, with the assistance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat, has developed an annual programme impact review to systematically evaluate its products and activities and that, as an initial step in a three-year project between the Department and the Office, the first annual programme impact review was completed in January 2004, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, and requests the Secretary-General to report further on the progress made to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

40. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information must prioritize its work programme while respecting existing mandates and in line with rule 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, to focus its message and concentrate its efforts better and, as a function of performance management, to match its programmes with the needs of its target audiences, on the basis of improved feedback and evaluation mechanisms;

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[9] A/AC.198/2004/7.

[10] A/AC.198/2004/7, annex.

United Nations information centres

41. *Reaffirms* paragraph 15 of its resolution 57/300, in which it took note of the proposal of the Secretary-General contained in action 8 of his report entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change",[11] to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, where appropriate, in consultation with concerned Member States, starting with the creation of a Western European hub, followed by a similar approach in other high-cost developed countries, and requests the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the implementation of the proposal with the objective of applying this initiative in other regions, in consultation with Member States, where this initiative will strengthen the flow and exchange of information in developing countries;

42. *Welcomes* the agreement between the Department of Public Information and the Western European countries to establish a regional United Nations information centre in Brussels;

43. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres,[12] stresses that the report could not, at the time it was written, fully address all aspects of the implementation of the rationalization of United Nations information centres in Western Europe and other high-cost developed countries, and, in this regard, requests the Secretary-General to report in detail to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

44. *Stresses* that the United Nations information centres and services and information components or regional hubs, as applicable, should play a significant role in disseminating information about the work of the Organization to the peoples of the world, including in the areas outlined in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and emphasizes that the information centres, or regional hubs, as applicable, as the "field voice" of the Department of Public Information, should promote public awareness of and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, bearing in mind that information in the local languages has the strongest impact on the local populations;

45. *Stresses* the special needs and requirements of developing countries in the field of information and communications technology, which are important factors for the effective flow of information in those countries;

46. *Affirms* that the measures highlighted and objectives expressed in paragraphs 41 to 45 above are central to future rationalization of United Nations information centres, which must be carried out in consultation, on a case-by-case basis, with all concerned Member States in which existing information centres are located, the countries served by those information centres and other interested countries in the region, taking into consideration the distinctive characteristics of each region;

47. *Requests* the Secretariat, in the framework of the rationalization process, to extend the services of the United Nations information centres and regional United Nations information centres, where applicable, to those Member States currently outside the scope of the field information capacity of the Department of Public Information;

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[11] A/57/387 and Corr.1.

[12] A/AC.198/2004/3.

48. *Requests* the Secretary-General, within the framework of the rationalization process, to take into account the needs of Portuguese-speaking African countries and the offer made by the Government of Angola;

49. *Recalls* paragraph 39 of its resolution 58/270 of 23 December 2003, and welcomes, in this context, the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information to review the allocation of both staff and financial resources to the United Nations information centres with a view to transferring resources from information centres in developed countries to United Nations information activities in developing countries, emphasizing the needs of the least developed countries, and to any other activities of high priority, such as multilingualism on the web site and evaluation of services, in consultation with concerned Member States;

50. *Encourages* United Nations information centres and regional United Nations information centres, as applicable, to develop web pages in local languages, also encourages the Department of Public Information to provide resources and technical facilities, in particular to those information centres whose web pages are not yet operational, and further encourages host countries to respond to the needs of the information centres;

51. *Recalls* the appeal made by the Secretary-General to host countries of United Nations information centres to facilitate the work of the centres in their countries by providing rent-free or rent-subsidized premises, while taking into account the economic condition of the host countries and bearing in mind that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial resources for the information centres in the context of the programme budget of the United Nations;

52. *Notes* the continuing support of the Department of Public Information in the consolidation of the United Nations field presence in a single United Nations house, and requests the Secretary-General to report in detail on the progress made to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

53. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to submit progress reports on the implementation of the rationalization process to the Committee on Information at its successive sessions and to include in these reports information on the functioning of the Department's field capacity, including newly established regional United Nations information centres, where applicable, and United Nations information centres that have undergone the rationalization process;

IV. Strategic communications services

54. *Notes* paragraph 6 of the report of the Secretary-General on the continuing reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications,[13] and in this context, reaffirms that the Department of Public Information is the principal department responsible for the implementation of information strategies, as mandated;

55. *Affirms* the role of the strategic communications services in devising and disseminating United Nations messages by developing communications strategies, in close collaboration with the substantive departments, United Nations funds and

[13] A/AC.198/2004/2.

programmes and the specialized agencies of the United Nations, in full compliance with the legislative mandates;

Promotional campaigns

56. *Recognizes* that promotional campaigns aimed at supporting special sessions and international conferences of the United Nations are part of the core responsibility of the Department of Public Information, and welcomes the efforts of the Department to examine creative ways in which it can organize and implement these campaigns in partnership with the substantive departments concerned, using the United Nations Millennium Declaration as its guide;

57. *Supports* the efforts of the Department of Public Information, while ensuring respect for the priorities established by the General Assembly, to also focus its promotional campaigns on the major issues identified by the Secretary-General;

58. *Appreciates* the work of the Department of Public Information in promoting, through its campaigns, issues of importance to the international community, such as sustainable development, children, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and decolonization, as well as the dialogue among civilizations, culture of peace and tolerance and the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and encourages the Department, in cooperation with the countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of these and other important global issues;

59. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to work within the United Nations Communications Group to coordinate the implementation of communication strategies with the heads of information of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at successive sessions on the activities of the Group;

60. *Stresses* the need for the renewed emphasis in support of Africa's development, in particular by the Department of Public Information, in order to promote awareness in the international community of the nature of the critical economic and social situation in Africa and of the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development;[14]

Role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping

61. *Commends* the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the establishment and functioning of the information components of peacekeeping operations and of political and peace-building missions of the United Nations, including its promotional efforts and other information support activities, and requests the Secretariat to continue to ensure the involvement of the Department from the planning stage of future operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with other departments of the Secretariat, in particular with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations;

[14] A/57/304, annex.

62. *Stresses* the importance of enhancing the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information in the field of peacekeeping operations and its role in the selection process of spokespersons for United Nations peacekeeping operations or missions, and, in this regard, encourages the Department to second spokespersons who have the necessary skills to fulfil the tasks of the operations or missions, taking into account the equitable geographical distribution in accordance with Chapter XV, Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, and to consider views expressed, especially by host countries, when appropriate, in this regard;

63. *Welcomes* the actions taken by the Department of Public Information to increase its involvement in the planning stage of new or expanding peacekeeping operations, as well as the deployment of public information components in new missions, and also welcomes the improvements made to the peacekeeping portal on the United Nations web site;

64. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts in supporting the peacekeeping missions to further develop their web sites;

65. *Regrets* the information gap between the new realities and successes of peacekeeping operations, especially multidimensional and complex ones, and the public perceptions, as stated by the Secretary-General in his report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations,[15] and stresses the need for a comprehensive public information strategy on peacekeeping operations, undertaken in close coordination with other relevant departments, in order to overcome the information gap and ensure a positive public impact;

66. *Emphasizes* the need for interdepartmental cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Public Information in order to develop the strategy requested in paragraph 65 above;

67. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Committee on Information on the role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping at its successive sessions;

Role of the Department of Public Information in strengthening dialogue among civilizations and culture of peace as means of enhancing understanding among nations

68. *Recalls* its resolutions 53/22 of 4 November 1998 and 55/23 of 13 November 2000 on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, 52/15 of 20 November 1997, proclaiming 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace, 53/25 of 10 November 1998, proclaiming the period 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World and 56/6 of 9 November 2001 on the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, encourages the Department of Public Information to provide the necessary support, within existing resources, for the dissemination of information pertaining to dialogue among civilizations and culture of peace and to take due steps in fostering the culture of dialogue among civilizations via all mass media, such as the Internet, print, radio and television, and requests the Secretary-General to submit

[15] A/58/694, para. 56.

a report in this regard at the twenty-seventh session of the Committee on Information;

V. News services

69. *Stresses* that the central objective of the news services, implemented by the News and Media Division, is the timely delivery of accurate, objective and balanced news and information emanating from the United Nations system in all four mass media — print, radio, television and Internet — to the media and other audiences worldwide with the overall emphasis on multilingualism;

Traditional means of communication

70. *Also stresses* that radio remains one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching traditional media available to the Department of Public Information and an important instrument in United Nations activities, including development and peacekeeping, with a view to achieving a broad client base around the world;

71. *Notes* that the international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations has been made an integral part of the activities of the Department of Public Information, and requests that the Secretary-General make every effort to ensure its success and report on its activities to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

72. *Requests* the Secretary-General to pay full attention to the parity of the six official languages in expanding the international radio broadcasting capacity;

73. *Notes* the efforts being made by the Department of Public Information to disseminate programmes directly to broadcasting stations all over the world in the six official languages, with the addition of Portuguese, as well as in other languages, where possible, and, in this regard, stresses the need for impartiality and objectivity concerning information activities of the United Nations;

74. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue building partnerships with local, national and regional broadcasters to extend the United Nations message to all the corners of the world in an accurate and impartial way;

75. *Emphasizes* that United Nations Radio and Television should take full advantage of the technological infrastructure made available in recent years, including satellite platforms, information and communication technologies and the Internet, and requests the Secretary-General, as a part of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information, to consider a global strategy for broadcasting, taking into account existing technologies;

United Nations web site

76. *Reiterates its appreciation* for the efforts of the Department of Public Information in creating a high-quality, user-friendly and cost-effective web site, noting that this is especially noteworthy considering the scope of the undertaking, the budget constraints within the United Nations and the remarkably rapid expansion of the World Wide Web, and reaffirms that the web site remains a very useful tool for media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, Member States and the general public;

77. *Stresses* the need for the Department of Public Information to take further measures to ensure accessibility to the United Nations web site by persons with disabilities, including visual and hearing disabilities, calls on the Department, as a first step, to ensure that all pages adhere to the obligatory level of compliance with recognized industry standards regarding such accessibility and, within existing resources, to work towards compliance with all other levels of such standards, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session on progress made in this regard;

78. *Notes* that the multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations web site has improved, although at a slower rate than expected owing to several constraints that need to be addressed, and, in this regard, encourages the Department of Public Information, in coordination with content-providing offices, to improve the actions undertaken to achieve parity among the six official languages on the United Nations web site;

79. *Stresses* the need to adopt a decision on the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site, considering, inter alia, the possibility of organizational restructuring towards separate language units for each of the six official languages within the Department of Public Information, in order to achieve full parity among the official languages of the United Nations;

80. *Reaffirms* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure, until such a decision has been taken and implemented, to the extent possible and while maintaining an up-to-date and accurate web site, the equitable distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public Information allocated to the United Nations web site among all official languages on a continuous basis, and to make every possible effort to ensure also that all materials contained on the web site that do not change and do not need regular maintenance are made available in all six official languages;

81. *Also reaffirms* the need to achieve full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations web sites, and, in this regard, takes note of the proposal of the Secretary-General[16] to translate all English materials and databases posted on the United Nations web sites by the respective content-providing offices of the Secretariat into all official languages, and reiterates its request to the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session on the most practical, efficient and cost-effective means of implementing this proposal;

82. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session proposals relating to the designation of a date by which all supporting arrangements would be in place for the implementation of this concept, after which date parity would continue, as well as proposals relating to the exemption from translation of specific items on the United Nations web site;

83. *Stresses* the importance of access for the public to the United Nations Treaty Collection and United Nations parliamentary documentation;

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[16] A/AC.198/2002/6, para. 33.

84. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to implement an e-mail service to inform subscribers of recent additions to the United Nations web site;

85. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to continue to take full advantage of recent developments in information technology in order to improve, in a cost-effective manner, the expeditious dissemination of information on the United Nations, in accordance with the priorities established by the General Assembly and taking into account the linguistic diversity of the Organization;

86. *Notes* the gap among different official languages on United Nations web sites, and recognizes that some official languages use non-Latin and bidirectional scripts;

87. *Recognizes* that technological infrastructures and supportive applications in the United Nations are based on Latin scripts which lead to difficulties in processing non-Latin and bidirectional scripts, and encourages the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts, to the extent possible, to ensure that technological infrastructures and supportive applications in the United Nations fully support Latin, non-Latin and bidirectional scripts so as to enhance the equality of all official languages on the United Nations web site;

88. *Notes with satisfaction* that the access to the official document system will be provided free to the public by the end of 2004, and requests the Secretary-General to report on progress to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

89. *Commends* the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services of the Secretariat on its efforts to ensure that the required technological infrastructure is in place to accommodate the linkage of the Official Document System to the United Nations web site, and also commends the Department of Public Information for addressing issues of content management relating to that System;

90. *Takes note* of paragraph 56 of its resolution 58/270, in which it reaffirmed that the Official Document System, as an archival and retrieval system of official documents, should cover the entire Organization, and requests the Secretary-General to transmit the report requested in this regard to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

91. *Welcomes* the electronic mail-based United Nations News Service, distributed worldwide through e-mail by the Department of Public Information, and requests the Department to provide this service in all official languages, ensuring that news-breaking stories and news alerts are accurate, impartial and free of bias;

92. *Welcomes* the inclusion of news e-mail services in the English and French languages and the Secretary-General's intention to include the other official languages in these services by 2004;

93. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General to continue to work within the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and other appropriate inter-agency bodies to establish a United Nations portal, an inter-agency search facility encompassing the public web sites of all United Nations system

organizations, and requests the Secretary-General to report on this matter to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

94. *Reiterates* its request to the Department of Public Information to encourage all United Nations system entities to participate in the United Nations system search pilot project, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session on the activities of the High-Level Committee on Management in this regard;

95. *Reaffirms* paragraph 42 of its resolution 58/270, in which it requested the Secretary-General to strengthen the web site through further redeployment to the required language posts;

VI. Library services

96. *Welcomes* the progress reported by the Secretary-General in his report on the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries and in-depth review of library activities,[17] in particular the efforts to fill gaps in the Official Document System, establish common standards for indexing, cataloguing and collection development, produce a common list of serials, eliminate duplication in the acquisition of electronic information, create joint web pages and assess the needs of the smaller libraries of the Organization;

97. *Welcomes* the creation of the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, and commends the Steering Committee for its coordinating role and initial organizational efforts and for reaching agreement on an impressive programme of work;

98. *Acknowledges* that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, as part of the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information, endeavours to facilitate access to timely and up-to-date library products and services for use by delegates, permanent missions of Member States, the Secretariat, researchers and depository libraries worldwide, also notes the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to make the Library a virtual library with world outreach, reiterates the need to enable the provision of hard copies to Member States, subject to the relevant provisions of its resolution 57/283 B of 15 April 2003, and further notes the efforts of the Secretary-General to enrich, on a multilingual basis, the stock of books and journals in the Library, including publications on peace and security and development-related issues, in order to ensure that the Library continues to be a broadly accessible resource for information about the United Nations and its activities;

99. *Calls upon* the Department of Public Information to continue to lead the Steering Committee, encourages the member libraries of the Steering Committee to coordinate closely and to establish time frames for fulfilment of its programme of work, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its successive sessions on the activities of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the work of the Steering Committee;

100. *Takes note* of paragraph 50 of resolution 58/270, in which it requested the Secretary-General to conduct, through the Office of Internal Oversight Services, a review of the operation and management of United Nations libraries, with a view to assessing staffing requirements for those libraries in the light of technological

[17] A/AC.198/2004/4.

advances in the delivery of information services, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, and requests the Secretary-General to transmit that report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session;

101. *Recognizes* the importance of the depository libraries in disseminating information and knowledge about United Nations activities, and, in this connection, urges the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in its capacity as the focal point, to take the initiatives necessary to strengthen such libraries by providing regional training and other assistance;

102. *Notes* the holding of training courses conducted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library for the representatives of Member States and Secretariat staff on the use of Cyberseek, web search, the Intranet, United Nations documentation, United Nations Info Quest and the Official Document System of the United Nations;

103. *Recalls* paragraph 44 of its resolution 56/64 B of 24 December 2001, in which it welcomed the role of the Department of Public Information in fostering increased collaboration among libraries of the United Nations system, particularly in establishing one central system-wide online catalogue that would allow for the searching of the bibliographic records of all print holdings of all United Nations system libraries; commends the International Computing Centre for developing the United Nations System Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System, which provides a single point of access to library catalogues, indexes and abstract databases, library holdings, links to full-text resources and archives; also commends the Department for its role in the development of the United Nations Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System; requests the Department to encourage all United Nations system organizations to participate in the System; and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session in this regard;

104. *Notes with appreciation* the operation of a common library in Nairobi within existing resources, in line with the approach set out in paragraph 37 of the Secretary-General's report on the modernization and integrated management of United Nations Libraries and in-depth review of library activities,[17] and urges all United Nations offices in Nairobi to participate in and support this venture;

VII. Outreach services

105. *Acknowledges* that the outreach services, implemented by the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information, continue to work towards promoting awareness of the role and work of the United Nations on priority issues;

106. *Notes* the importance of the continued implementation by the Department of Public Information of the ongoing programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries in transition, as mandated by the General Assembly, and encourages the Department to consider how best to maximize the benefits derived from the programme by reviewing, inter alia, its duration and the number of its participants;

107. *Recognizes* the need for the Department of Public Information to increase its outreach services in all regions, and reiterates the need to include, in the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, an analysis of the present reach and scope of the activities of the Department, identifying the widest possible spectrum of audiences and geographical

areas that are not covered adequately and that may require special attention, including the appropriate means of communication and bearing in mind local language requirements;

108. *Welcomes* the movement towards educational outreach and the orientation of the United Nations Chronicle, both print and online editions, to this end;

109. *Calls upon* the Department of Public Information to strengthen its role as a focal point for two-way interaction with civil society relating to the priorities and concerns of the Organization;

110. *Congratulates* the United Nations Correspondents Association for its Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Scholarship Fund, which sponsors journalists from developing countries to come to the United Nations Headquarters and report on the activities during the General Assembly, and urges donors to extend financial support to the Fund so that it may increase the number of such scholarships to journalists in this context;

111. *Notes* that the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations will be observed in 2005, and requests the Department of Public Information to take necessary measures to publicize the occasion in every way possible, stressing the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter and highlighting its accomplishments in the past six decades;

VIII. Final remarks

112. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session and to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

113. *Requests* the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session;

114. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixtieth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

Draft decision
Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 102 to 107 and to appoint Cape Verde, Iceland, Luxembourg, Madagascar and Qatar as members of the Committee on Information.